

Writing Topic Sentences

Overview: A topic sentence is usually the first sentence that appears in a body paragraph. In general, **topic sentences should let the reader know what the purpose of the paragraph is and how that relates to the thesis.** Topic sentences are important because they help the reader understand how each paragraph relates to the overall argument.

Creating a Topic Sentence: When writing a topic sentence, you may find it useful to:

1. Reread your thesis
2. Consult your outline
3. Ask yourself: What does this paragraph need to do? What do I need to let my reader know?

Testing Your Topic Sentence: After you have written your paper, you will want to revise it.

One way to revise is to focus on the clarity and accuracy of your topic sentence. One way to do this is to read each topic sentence and ask yourself the following.

1. If I had never read this paper, would the topic sentence give me enough information to know what this paragraph is generally about?
2. What is the purpose of this paragraph? Does the topic sentence help the reader understand that purpose?

Example

Let's imagine that we are writing a paper about pet ownership. Before we can develop topic sentence, we need a thesis.

- Thesis: Children should have pets because pet ownership teaches children compassion, good habits, and responsibility.

Not let's imagine that we are going to write an essay that includes some common moves that body paragraphs make.

- Thesis: Children should have pets because pet ownership teaches children compassion, good habits, and responsibility.
 - Body Paragraph 1: summary relevant literature
 - Topic Sentence: Many people have already researched the topic of childhood development and pet ownership.
 - Body paragraph 2: subclaim 1
 - Topic Sentence: Caring for a pet is an important way that children learn compassion.
 - Body paragraph 3: subclaim 2
 - Topic Sentence: In addition, owning a pet gives children the opportunity to develop good habits.
 - Body paragraph 4: subclaim 3
 - Topic Sentence: Finally, children should care for a pet because it is an excellent way for children to learn responsibility.
 - Body paragraph 5: Counterargument

- However, some may argue that children can learn all these important qualities without ever owning a pet.